Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator yield for an inquiry?

Mr. BRYAN. I yield for an inquiry, but I do not lose the floor; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thought it was customary that we went back and forth in a manner that is traditional with the Senate. I have seen this occur from time to time. All I can ask the Chair is to recognize and view the entire Chamber, because the Senator from Alaska had been advised to be here at 9:50. The Senator from Alaska was here and was not recognized, even though the Senator had been standing up.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It is the Chair's understanding of the rules of the U.S. Senate, the Chair is to recognize the Member who first addresses the Chair. In this case——

Mr. MURKOWSKI. The Senator from Alaska addressed the Chair in a timely manner.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Senator will suspend——

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Well, I am very disappointed. If the Chair——

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Senator will suspend, the Chair will finish the statement. It is the Chair's understanding of the rules of the U.S. Senate the Chair is to recognize the first Member who addresses the Chair.

It was the Chair's opinion, and still is the Chair's opinion, that the first Member clearly to address the Chair was the Senator from Nevada. The Chair, therefore, recognized the Senator from Nevada.

Further, it is the understanding of this Chair that there is no rule in the U.S. Senate that provides for alternating back and forth. That can be accommodated between the Members themselves, but it cannot be done by the Chair. The Chair has no authority to do that. The Senator from Nevada has the floor.

Mr. BRYAN. I would like to accommodate——

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Senator will yield.

Mr. BRYAN. I would like to accommodate. I think the Senator from Alaska and I both have had time set aside during the morning business. I had time and I know he had time. It is going to require unanimous consent that time be extended. I will offer to extend time for him as well.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BRYAN. I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended for a period of 20 minutes, so I might be accommodated for my 10 minutes and the distinguished Senator from Alaska may be accommodated for his 10 minutes.

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. President, I shall not object. I do not think there is any need for all this activity, and I have the greatest respect. I am supposed to be up at 10 o'clock. So I am not going to lose any sleep on that. Let us proceed and then we will go to the regular order. Senator MURKOWSKI can have 5 minutes and certainly Senator BRYAN. There is no rule in the U.S. Senate in morning business, in any sense, that there be an accommodation on both sides. That is not morning business. It is the first one present and the first one seeking recognition. Really, I hope there will not be any acrimony with regard to that decision.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). Is there objection to the request? If not, it is so ordered. The time is extended for 20 minutes. The Senator from Nevada still has the floor.

Mr. BRYAN. I thank the Chair.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, tomorrow, April 26, is the 10th anniversary of the most dramatic ecological disaster of the 20th century—the explosion of reactor No. 4 at the V.I. Lenin Atomic Power Plant in Chernobyl, Ukraine.

On that day, 10 years ago tomorrow, a combination of poor design, human error—or, more accurately, human negligence and incompetence—led to a massive explosion within the core of reactor No. 4—an explosion that blew off the 2,000-ton reactor chamber roof, spewing massive amounts of radiation into the surrounding area and the Earth's atmosphere in a radioactive cloud that eventually reached as far away as California.

It was not until several years after the disaster occurred that the truth about Chernobyl, the crown jewel of the Soviet nuclear power industry, began to emerge—that following the explosion, reactor No. 4 experienced what has long been considered the worst-case scenario in nuclear power—a full reactor meltdown. The core material burned, exposed to the atmosphere, for nearly 10 days, and resulting in a total meltdown.

Our colleague, Senator KENNEDY, summed it up shortly after the disaster, when he said ''The ultimate lesson of Chernobyl is that human and technological error can cause disaster anytime, anywhere.'' That has particular residence for us in Nevada.

The ecological and economic consequences of Chernobyl were massive, immediate, and will last for tens of thousands of years.

Thirty-one people died as an immediate result of the explosion, 200 were hospitalized, and 135,000 were evacuated from 71 nearby towns and villages. High doses of radiation spread over at least 10,000 square miles, affecting 5 million people in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. The explosion spread more than 200 times the radiation released by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts combined. Anywhere from 32,000 to 150,000 people could eventually die as a result of the blast. Millions of people have had their lives permanently disrupted by the accident. Belarus and Ukraine now report a broad rise in respiratory illness, heart disease, and birth defects. Scientists are still waiting to see what the role may be of the radiation exposure in leading to the many cancers that take longer than 10 years to develop, but expect it to be significant.

The children of Belarus have been particularly hard hit. Seventy percent of the Chernobyl fallout landed in Belarus—a nation that itself has no nuclear reactors. Huge tracts of land in Belarus were contaminated with radioactive cesium, strontium, and plutonium. Prior to 1986, Belarus's thyroid cancer rate for children under 14 was typical—2 cases in a nation of about 10 million. By 1992, the rate was up to 66, and by 1994, the rate had increased to 82—an increase that can only be explained by the Chernobyl fallout.

One quarter of the land of Belarus, home to one-fifth of the nation's population, has been severely contaminated by the Chernobyl explosion.

The power plant complex is surrounded by an 18-mile radius exclusion zone—an area of very high contamination that is off-limits to for residence and entry without a special permit.

Lying outside of the exclusion zone is a much larger area with lesser, but still very high, contamination. Despite official government pronouncements that this area is unsafe, it is still home to 237,000 residents of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, who simply cannot afford to live anywhere else.

The remains of reactor No. 4, still highly radioactive, are contained in a hastily erected sarcophagus—a highly unstable structure, considered by many the most dangerous building on earth. As concerns regarding the possibility of collapse of the sarcophagus or the reactor entombed inside increase, it is unclear if the technological or financial challenges of stabilizing and cleaning up reactor No. 4 can ever be met.

Mr. President, If Chernobyl has taught us anything, it is that when dealing with such high-risk matters as nuclear power, or nuclear waste, small mistakes can have enormous consequences.

Next week, the Senate may turn to a bill aptly dubbed the ''Mobile Chernobyl Bill''—S. 1271, the Craig nuclear waste bill.

As many of my colleagues are aware, this establishes, on an accelerated schedule, a so-called interim high-level nuclear waste dump in Nevada.

I want to be clear on what this interim storage program means. Tens of thousands of tons of high-level nuclear waste will be removed from reactors, loaded on over 16,000 trains and trucks, and shipped cross country to Nevada, a State with no nuclear power. The